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Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ASMARA 00257 280956Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------280957Z 006271 /20
O 280915Z MAR 77
FM AMCONSUL ASMARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4431
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

S E C R E T ASMARA 0257

EXDIS

ADDIS FOR CHARGE ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PORS, PFOR, ET, US
SUBJECT: SAFETY OF AMCITS IN ASMARA
REF: (A) STATE 067840, (B) ASMARA 0139

1. NONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE 12-MAN NAVY COMMUNICATIONS UNIT AT KAGNEW STATION IS ON AN ACCOMPANIED TOUR. DEPARTMENT WILL NOTE FROM OUR DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SECURITY IN ASMARA (REFTEL B) THAT NO AMCIT DEPENDENT OF OFFICIAL PERSONNEL RESIDES IN ASMARA. SEVERAL DOD CONTRACT PERSONNEL HAVE NON-AMCIT (I.E. ETHIOPIAN) DEPENDENTS HERE.

2. IN PAST SIX WEEKS, SECURITY SITUATION IN ASMARA HAS IMPROVED MODESTLY OVER THAT DEPICTED IN REFTEL B. SECOND DIVISION TROOPS ARE NO LONGER UNEASY, CONVOYS ARE RUNNING REGULARLY (APPROX. 3 TRIPS PER WEEK TO MASSAWA), FACTORIES AND PLANTS ARE IN FULL OPERATION (THUS REMOVING IDLE WORKERS FROM STREETS), AND INCIDENCE OF FIREFIGHTS IN VICINITY OF CITY HAS DROPPED PRECIPITOUSLY. WE HAVE EXPERIENCED TWO FIREFIGHTS IN PAST SIX WEEKS; THE MOST RECENT (MARCH 20) WAS APPROXIMATELY 5 MILES OUTSIDE OF TOWN.

3. NONE OF RECENT HAZARDOUS INNOVATIONS IN ADDIS HAS OCCURRED,
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NOR IS LIKELY IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE TO OCCUR, IN ASMARA. THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO PROSPECT THAT KEBELE (CIVILIAN DISTRICT COMMITTEE) MEMBERS WOULD BE GIVEN ARMS IN ERITREA, LEAST OF ALL WITH A MANDATE TO "DEFEND THE REVOLUTION"; HOUSE-TO-HOUSE SEARCHES ARE EXTREMELY UNLIKELY; AND ROADBLOCK CHECK-POINTS INSIDE CITY WOULD BE SUPERFLUOUS. WE ALREADY HAVE AN ENFORCED CURFEW AT 7:30 PM. UNLIKE OTHER AREAS OF ETHIOPIA, ERITREA (AND ASMARA) HAS

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NO TRADITION OF CARRYING WEAPONS OR KEEPING THEM IN HOUSES. UNDER LONGTIME ITALIAN AND BRITISH RULE, SUCH PRACTICE WAS HEAVILY PUNISHED AND THEREFORE HABIT OF KEEPING PERSONAL ARMS NEVER DEVELOPED.

4. MAJOR CONCERN OF KAGNEW PERSONNEL RELATES TO POSSIBILITY OF PRECIPITOUS CLOSE-DOWN OF KAGNEW STATION, AND RESULTING DANGER TO PERSONS AND PROPERTY FROM UNPROGRAMMED SCRAMBLE TO EVACUATE. ALL CONCERNED BELIEVE IT IMPERATIVE THAT A CLOSE-DOWN, IF DECIDED UPON, IS DONE IN AN ORDERLY, TIDY MANNER WITH FULLY AGREED ARRANGEMENTS WORKED OUT WITH THE EPMG, INCLUDING PRIOR SETTLEMENT OF ALL RENTS AND DEBTS AND AGREED DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY.

5. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT BY TERMS OF THE 1953 AGREEMENT ON DEFENSE INSTALLATIONS IN ETHIOPIA, USG IS OBLIGATED TO REQUEST FORMALLY AND ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO THE ELIMINATION OF ANY EXISTING FACILITY (ART. 1). UNILATERAL DECISION TO EVACUATE KAGNEW WOULD GRAVELY ENDANGER PERSONS AND PROPERTY OF MEN ASSIGNED HERE, AND LEAVE CONGEN WITH RESIDUE OF ILL-WILL ENGENDERED THEREBY.
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Message Attributes

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